**ACTIVITY CROSSING THE STREET 29th May 2022**

1. **Sharing the good news with those we “know”**

Take some time to read about the person described. In your own words describe them to a neighbour and then seek to answer the questions together. Each of you are likely to have someone different

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But how is it good news and how can we share in a way that connects?

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**Jill** is in her 60’s. With little background in the Church she has probably never read the Bible or knows much about what it teaches, but Jill is angry with God.

There have been things in her life that she thinks are unfair, and at the moment she has significant fears and is going through a very difficult time.

It is hard to know why she believes it is God’s fault – but it would appear that for her – if God exists – then he should have stopped them happening or at least fixed it when it began to all go wrong.

Jill would probably tick ‘Christian’ in the religion box of the census. She doesn’t fit any of the other options - and as she probably believes in God and thinks she should go to heaven - then she must be!

Jill has no real problem with the Church. I think she has been a couple of times to a variety of Churches, but doesn’t see the need for it herself.

When talking about these things, Jill said: “I don’t understand why you have to go to Church and be better than others to get to heaven. Surely you can believe in God without all that.”

Sin, and not meeting God’s standards would never cross her mind.

What would it mean to cross the street for Jill?

How is the Gospel of the Kingdom Good news for Jill?

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	2. For others 'Christian' is positive word or seen as normative – after all we live in a Christian country! For them ‘believing” in God and being relatively good (do unto others.... ) is what it is all about. Such people are the ones who believe they will get to heaven because they believe in God and are relatively good people. They would probably tick 'Christian' in a survey.
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	3. Not on agenda. It would appear, that for many spiritual things are not on their agenda at all. Often because they are immersed in something else – career, family, sport - these things are what they pursue to give meaning and purpose. Times of transition or disappointment are a real opportunity to help such people consider Jesus. For others they have given up or just can't be bothered. Perhaps out of previous disillusionment, or a life time of ignorance. Perhaps it is because they feel they have searched it out and found it wanting!
	4. For others there is active antagonism. Rarely in my experience does this mean it is actually not something they think about but it is what they will tell you. Often this antagonism is a result of a previous bad experience. For some this antagonism towards belief in God is justified by all the bad things that happen in the world. I believe this is often a ruse and a way forward can be to simply ask: “Tell me about the god you don’t believe in”. I then can often respond: “I don’t believe in that od either!”
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**Aiden** appears to me to be a typical Australian family man.

He does his Job faithfully, loves to catch up with mates for a drink, is concerned about his kids and involved in their sporting activities.

Aiden tries as best as he can to have a good relationship with his wife.

Often our conversations are around the behaviour of his kids. “It is not like in previous generations” he says “No respect, values are slipping, little drive”.

These themes tend to dominate.

Aiden appears to have no spiritual interest, although he is fascinated that I am so much into Church.

He finds it intriguing that someone like me could be so much into religion and invest his life and family in the way I do.

I think he admires it, but can’t quite understand why anyone would.

I am not sure that God or spirituality enters his thoughts much – except when things I say and do prompt him to wonder.

Early on he made it clear he was not interested. But occasionally he brings it up.

Aiden has mentioned that he should come to Church with us sometime, but I think that is more out of cultural curiosity than any interest in joining or taking on our beliefs.

Aiden believes the world is heading downhill and fear is a big part of what he feels – but it still doesn’t appear to cause him to have an active searching after God.

Perhaps he still hopes that somehow mankind will find the answer themselves.

Does Jesus have anything to offer Aiden? What questions could you ask or statements could you make that might cause him

 to think about faith for himself?

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	2. For others 'Christian' is positive word or seen as normative – after all we live in a Christian country! For them ‘believing” in God and being relatively good (do unto others.... ) is what it is all about. Such people are the ones who believe they will get to heaven because they believe in God and are relatively good people. They would probably tick 'Christian' in a survey.
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	2. Self help, personal improvement, new age. Others consider Spirituality and religion not about 'God' - as we would understand Him, but about reaching 'my fullest potential'. To achieve this they pursue anything that is thought to work – natural therapies and new age practices, snippets from whichever religion they fancy, even attending a Church can be part of such improvement. In the midst of this there is usually a genuine searching and commitment to being fulfilled, integrated and spiritual.
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	4. For others there is active antagonism. Rarely in my experience does this mean it is actually not something they think about but it is what they will tell you. Often this antagonism is a result of a previous bad experience. For some this antagonism towards belief in God is justified by all the bad things that happen in the world. I believe this is often a ruse and a way forward can be to simply ask: “Tell me about the god you don’t believe in”. I then can often respond: “I don’t believe in that od either!”
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**Dean** is doing ok in life. He has a growing business and is a bit of an entrepreneur who is always on the move. He doesn’t expect to ever become really rich, but certainly would like to be comfortable.

He is relatively happily married with one teenager at home.

He has a number of long term friends. Dean is social, usually good company and willing to help anyone who genuinely needs it.

He gives the impression of being satisfied and needing nothing.

Dean has had little background in the Church. But he likes to talk about spiritual things and thinks Jesus is ok and said some interesting stuff – even occasionally quoting him – wrongly!

It appears to me there is no consistency or pattern in the topics he raises.

Other than occasionally reflecting on his mortality it is difficult to know what causes his interest.

My guess is – despite his apparent happiness he feels an emptiness, a longing that he can’t put his finger on.

However it would be fair to say, Dean doesn’t perceive his need for God and I think he would find it difficult to ever become a part of Church as his life is already full and his networks sufficient.

Does the gospel have anything to say to Dean? What could you say or do that might help him look a bit deeper into the Christian faith?

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**Kathy**, a woman in her 30’s is very much into spirituality.

She is fascinated, more than that, driven, by a desire to be a whole, well integrated individual whose spiritual experience pervades and influences every other action and decision.

Kathy is highly suspicious of organised religion.

I do not know if that is because of a previous negative experience.

Kathy did admit to me that, until we met, it had never crossed her mind that her spiritual searching could or should include Church.

Kathy and I began a conversation because she was beginning to doubt her own capacity to evaluate the value of the variety of spiritual influences she was touched by and had significant spiritual fears for her child.

Interestingly the Spirit Mind Psychic expo was also not part of her exploration.

I think she believes that her own experiences and capacity to comprehend is sufficient to make sense of it all.

Kathy has an openness to explore Christian truth, and considers herself close to Jesus, but greatly struggles with anything that gives the appearance of an authoritative declaration or approach.

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